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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000249

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: MORE FROM BURMA'S DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: A. A) RANGOON 223

[1](#)B. B) RANGOON 171

Classified By: CDA Shari Villarosa for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Deputy Foreign Minister Kyaw Thu requested Charge meet with him again February 22 - alone. He apparently wants to continue a dialogue (ref A), made more difficult by his move to Pyinmana and difficult to do by phone because, he said, others could be listening in. Again referring to his military background, he said that he was willing to make sacrifices for the people, but he was not willing to do so for "Ne Win, Saw Maung, or Than Shwe-they are just individuals." After discussing sanctions and humanitarian assistance, Charge agreed to meet with him regularly one-on-one to exchange views. He suggested March after the visits by the Indonesian and Indian Presidents for the next meeting. He also indicated that the visit of the Malaysian Foreign Minister would take place before an upcoming April ASEAN meeting, but the date had not yet been set. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Kyaw Thu began by noting that other officials were reluctant to meet with Charge and the British Ambassador because they feared their comments will become public and they could get in trouble here. He declared that he was not afraid, but seemed reassured when Charge said, although the discussion would be reported to Washington, it would be kept confidential.

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SANCTIONS and HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

[1](#)3. (C) Kyaw Thu complained about sanctions implying that they were made based on faulty information, without specifying any examples. He said the sanctions only hurt the people, not the senior generals. He said that the Burmese people blamed the U.S. for 300,000 textile workers losing their jobs, although he later amended that saying the leaders could blame the sanctions for the job losses. Charge replied that the end of the Multifibre Agreement likely had far more to do with the loss of jobs than sanctions, and this phenomenon had been observed around the world as manufacturers voluntarily shifted operations to China and the most efficient producers. She also stated that we strived to make our reports as objective as possible, noting that we had positively described Burma's progress reducing poppy cultivation and heroin production. We gathered our information from a wide variety of sources, and welcomed any information that the GOB might provide.

[1](#)4. (C) Charge said that we recognized that the leaders could protect themselves from the impact of sanctions, but asked how else should we indicate our disapproval of Burma's policies. She noted that the sanctions passed after Aung San Suu Kyi and her party were very violently attacked, even though neither she nor her followers ever advocated violence. Charge added that, contrary to rumors, the U.S. did not plan to use violence to indicate our disapproval of the regime. However, absent a genuine political opening, the sanctions would likely remain in place. She reiterated that we would not hold out for perfection, but that we wanted to see all the relevant parties discuss together and decide together the best course for Burma's political future.

[1](#)5. (C) Even though we disapproved of the current regime, Charge said that the U.S. recognized the humanitarian needs of the people and had tried to assist them. However, it appeared that the GOB seemed to be tightening the restrictions on international assistance (ref B). Kyaw Thu interjected that "two people" had decided to increase the restrictions. Charge cited Pyinmana as an example of how the GOB, not the international community, diverted resources from the education and health needs of the people. Kyaw Thu added that those funds could also have been used to improve Rangoon's infrastructure. Charge said that the international community would be interested in assisting with health and education, but could not do so if the regime restricted

access to the people. The Burmese "powers that be" could choose to facilitate assistance and increase access if they cared about the people.

#### UPCOMING VISITORS

16. (C) Kyaw Thu also discussed upcoming senior visitors. He noted that the Indonesian President would visit next week. Charge said she hoped the meeting would go beyond the usual protocol and that the Burmese would discuss Indonesia's democratic transition. She said that Indonesia had valuable lessons to offer and had an even more diverse population than Burma's. She noted that the Indonesian military, after 30 years in power, still had a respected position in the society along with most of their businesses. Charge asked if the visit of the Malaysian Foreign Minister was still on. Kyaw Thu replied that he had just met Malaysian Foreign Ministry Secretary Fuzi to discuss the timing for a Hamid visit. They

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agreed that it should happen before the April ASEAN Foreign Minister's meeting, but that the timing was complicated by the March visits of the Indonesian and Indian Presidents and Burma's five day water festival holiday in mid-April. He repeated that it would go forward, although he did not respond to Charge's question whether Hamid would have all of his requested meetings.

17. (C) Comment: The most newsworthy item concerned the Hamid visit. This meeting confirms our initial impression that Kyaw Thu is fed up with his own system. He did not seem interested in debating nor seem to be searching for information to take back to others trying to get out of a box of their own making. Instead, he seemed to be venting his own frustrations. Charge will continue to meet with him in the hope that accurate information about U.S. policy objectives will be relayed during his conversations with other colleagues, especially since they will have a lot of time on their hands in Pyinmana.

VILLAROSA